The Electrified Currents of Passion and Power: Sorel, Pareto, and the Posthuman Order

The twentieth century's prophets of social vitality, Georges Sorel and Vilfredo Pareto, each diagnosed a civilization suffocating under the weight of its own rationality. To them, Europe's liberal order had become anemic: too much calculation, too little conviction. What

they could not foresee—yet somehow described in essence—was the twenty-first-century world of algorithms, networks, and artificial intelligence, where reason and irrationality have fused into a single electrified system. Our "cyber-postmodern" condition may have new tools, but it still obeys the old rhythms of passion and power.

Sorel, the French syndicalist

and reluctant Marxist, believed the modern worker's tragedy was not material deprivation but spiritual exhaustion. His Reflections on Violence imagined the "myth" of the general strike as a moral and aesthetic act—a collective artwork capable of restoring heroism to social life. He thought myth to be a generator of energy, not a falsehood but a necessary fiction that organizes emotion into action. Strip

society of such myths, he warned, and you are left with a bureaucratic corpse: efficient, comfortable, and utterly without purpose.

A century later, we inhabit precisely that corpse—but now it twitches with electrical impulses. Our myths no longer arise from class struggle or divine revelation; they are coded, curated, and transmitted through networks. Viral

movements, meme wars, influencer crusades—these are the digital mutations of Sorel's revolutionary imagination. Each online surge is a miniature general strike of attention, mobilizing affect against the boredom of managed life. The myth survives; only its stage has changed. The algorithm has replaced the pamphlet.

Pareto, the Italian economist-turned-sociologist,

approached the same malaise from a colder angle. In his Trattato di sociologia generale, he sought the laws underlying social change. His conclusion was both elegant and disenchanted: history is the circulation of elites. The names change, the costumes vary, but power concentrates and renews itself through a constant rotation of ruling minorities. Beneath their ideologies lie “residues”—the primal impulses that drive

behavior—and “derivations,” the rationalizations we invent to dignify them. For Pareto, politics was an endless masquerade of reason over instinct.

Our age vindicates his cynicism. The supposed meritocracies of Silicon Valley and global finance behave like textbook Pareto elites: innovators at first, then entrenched oligarchs defending privilege behind

moral rhetoric. The language of “disruption” and “progress” is simply the latest derivation; the residue remains ambition, domination, and fear of decline. Even our data-driven governance—algorithms deciding credit, surveillance, or influence—follows his curve of concentration: the 80/20 rule as social destiny. Pareto’s equations have become the nervous system of digital capitalism.

Taken together, Sorel and Pareto sketch a double helix of modern power. One strand is emotional—mythic passion, the need for meaning, the collective surge. The other is structural—statistical hierarchy, the self-organization of elites. Between them flows the current of contemporary life: an alternating charge of belief and control, excitement and exhaustion. We live, as

they foresaw, in a world where faith and cynicism coexist, where the revolutionary's fire is monetized by the technocrat, and where every eruption of moral fervor becomes another data point in the system's self-correction.

Artificial intelligence does not break this pattern; it amplifies it. The machine mind is Pareto's dream of pure analysis fused with

Sorel's nightmare of mythic mobilization. Algorithms both predict our behavior and feed it back to us as narrative. They quantify desire while intensifying it. The new elites are not generals or priests but engineers of attention, harvesting emotion as energy. The myths we consume are no longer written—they are generated. Passion has been electrified; power has become invisible.

To study Sorel and Pareto today is to recognize that the old philosophical oppositions—reason versus emotion, order versus chaos—no longer hold. The digital field is continuous: data flows as desire, and desire as data. The task, then, is not to reject either pole but to learn to read the current itself—to understand how stories and systems intertwine, how myth can be conscious rather

than manipulative, how power can circulate without petrifying into oligarchy.

The twentieth century bled itself discovering these truths through violence. The twenty-first must learn them through reflection. Sorel reminds us that vitality without morality ends in catastrophe; Pareto warns that intelligence without empathy decays into domination. Their combined message is austere but vital:

civilization survives only when passion and power are balanced by awareness. In the circuitry of our new world, that awareness is the only insulation we have left.